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VOID RIVALS
image
#12

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I AM DROPPING ALL PRETENSE. MY ARMY HAS--NO, I HAVE FAILED. YOUR SON AND HIS COMPANION DID ESCAPE.
THEY FLED TO THE WASTELAND. WE PURSUED THEM, BUT THEY HAVE SLIPPED THROUGH MY GRASP.
UNITY HAS NOT BEEN AVERTED AND IS VERY MUCH STILL IN PLAY.

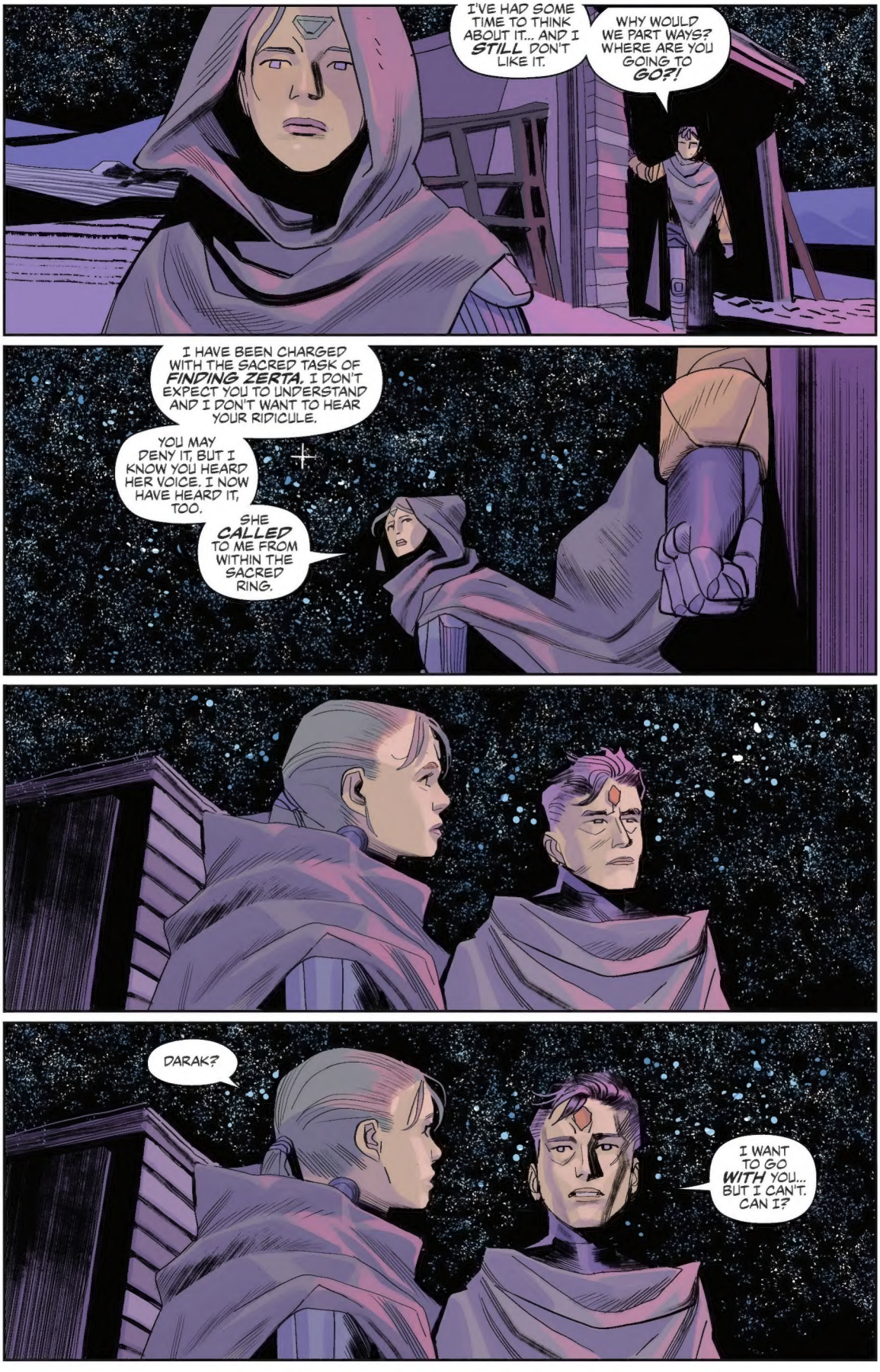
I FEAR, MINISTER DULIN, THAT THE FATE OF EVERYTHING WE HOLD DEAR... NOW RESTS IN YOUR HANDS.
IT PAINS ME TO SEE YOU THIS WAY, PREMIER ZALILAK. I AM WELL AWARE OF WHAT IS AT STAKE, SO YOUR DISTRESS IS WARRANTED...
BUT IT ALARMS ME NONETHELESS TO SEE SOMEONE OF YOUR STATURE... BROUGHT SO LOW.

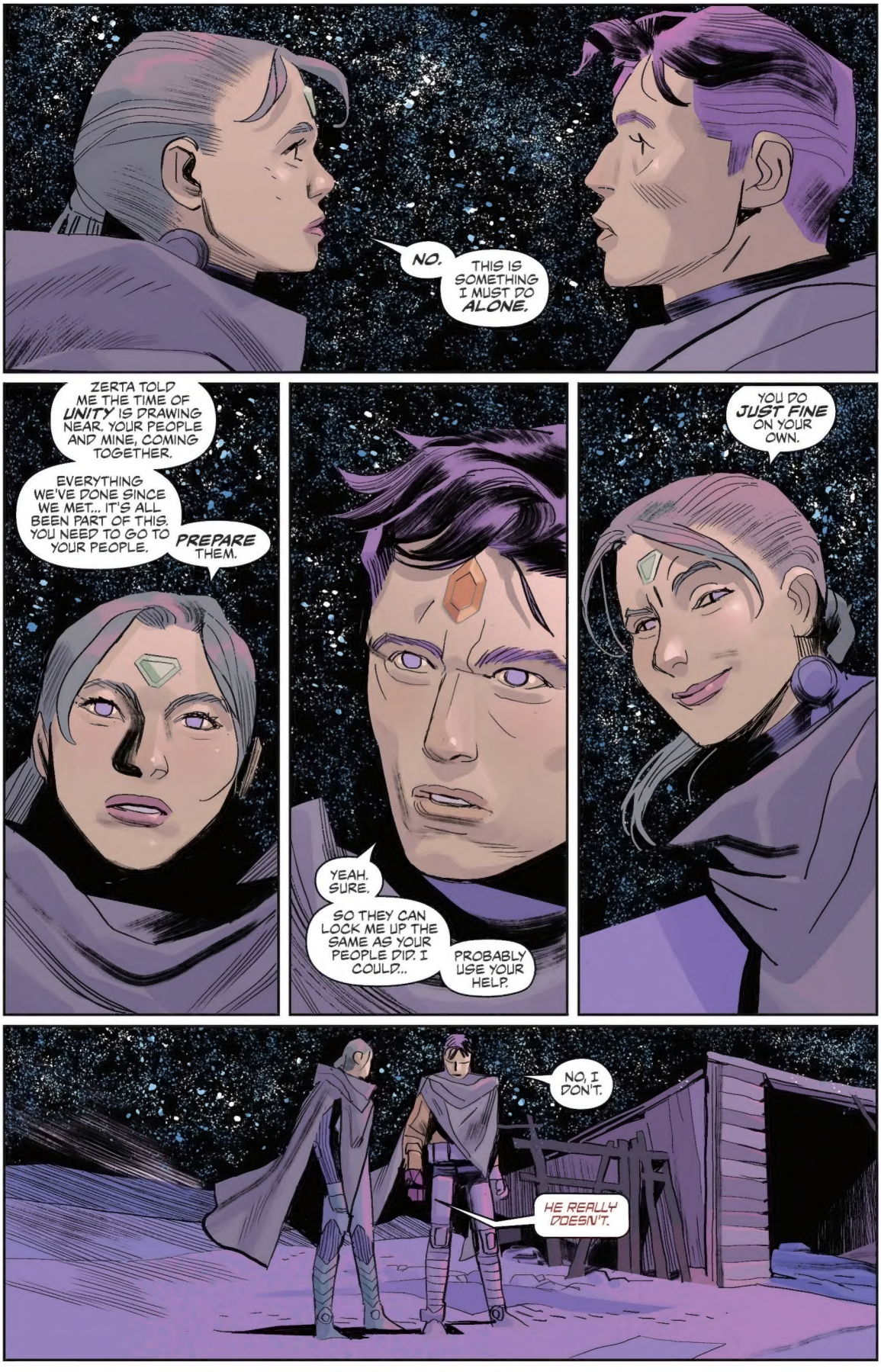
YOU TAKE THIS MOMENT TO GLOAT?! YOU TOY WITH ME IN THE FACE OF OUR DESTRUCTION?!
HOW DARE YOU?!
CALM YOURSELF, FRIEND.
WE HAVE BEEN AT THIS FOR LONGER THAN I CARE TO ACKNOWLEDGE. THIS ISN'T OUR FIRST SCARE.
I BELIEVE YOU ARE DIMINISHING THE URGENCY OF THIS SITUATION.
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME THE AGORRIANS HAVE HAD TO CLEAN UP YOUR MESS... AND I FEAR IT WON'T BE THE LAST.
DULIN, OUT.
...

THERE YOU ARE, SIRE!
OUR SCIENTISTS-- I WAS SENT TO LOCATE YOU, URGENTLY. THEY HAVE ANALYZED THE DATA PAD THE SOLDIERS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE WASTELAND...
AND...?
THEY CLAIM IT CONTAINS THE MOST REMARKABLE DISCOVERY!
IF TRUE, IT COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING FOR US!
NOTIFY ME WHEN THEY'VE CONFIRMED THE DATA'S VALIDITY. I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THIS.

ARE YOU DEAD?
NO. I AM NOT.
MY ARMS AND LEGS ARE MECHANICAL. WHAT REMAINS OF MY LIVING BODY IS INTACT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, CHILD?
HIDING, SIR.
I BETRAYED MY FRIENDS. I REALLY REGRET IT. AFTER MY FRIENDS GOT AWAY, I WAS LEFT BEHIND AND THEY MADE ME A CADET.
I... WAS A CADET ONCE...
IT'S REALLY SCARY. OR AT LEAST, I THINK SO.
THEY TOLD ME THEY'D FIND MY MOM, BUT I THINK THEY LIED.
I THINK MY MOM IS DEAD.
...
SHE PROBABLY IS.

=SOB!=
STOP THAT. THEY'LL HEAR.
SORRY, SIR.
I CAN BE STRONG, SIR. I PROMISE.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, SIR?
PROXIMUS.
I'M ULTUM. CAN WE HIDE TOGETHER, PROXIMUS?
...
SURE, KID.


I'VE HAD SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT... AND I STILL DON'T LIKE IT.
WHY WOULD WE PART WAYS? WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO GO?!
I HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH THE SACRED TASK OF FINDING ZERTA. I DON'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND AND I DON'T WANT TO HEAR YOUR RIDICULE.
YOU MAY DENY IT, BUT I KNOW YOU HEARD HER VOICE. I NOW HAVE HEARD IT, TOO.
SHE CALLED TO ME FROM WITHIN THE SACRED RING.
DARAK?
I WANT TO GO WITH YOU... BUT I CAN'T. CAN I?

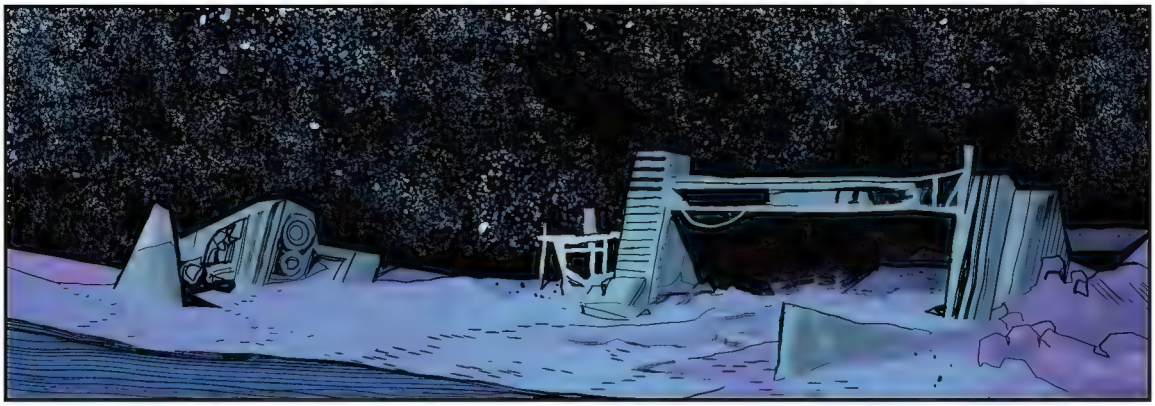

NO.
THIS IS SOMETHING I MUST DO ALONE.
ZERTA TOLD ME THE TIME OF UNITY IS DRAWING NEAR. YOUR PEOPLE AND MINE, COMING TOGETHER.
EVERYTHING WE'VE DONE SINCE WE MET... IT'S ALL BEEN PART OF THIS. YOU NEED TO GO TO YOUR PEOPLE.
PREPARE THEM.
YEAH. SURE.
SO THEY CAN LOCK ME UP THE SAME AS YOUR PEOPLE DID. I COULD...
PROBABLY USE YOUR HELP.
YOU DO JUST FINE ON YOUR OWN.
NO, I DON'T.
HE REALLY DOESN'T.

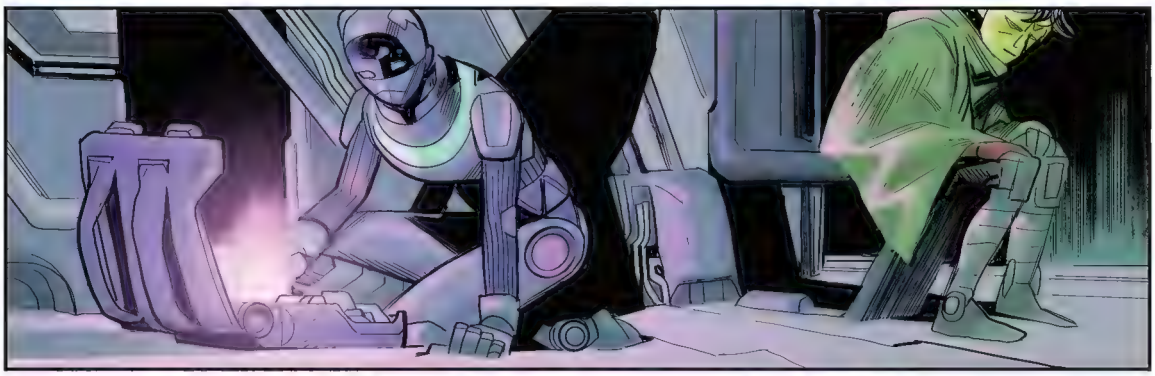
MONACUS.
VZAPP
VZAPP
"NO JOB IS TOO DANGEROUS IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT!"
STUPID! STUPID! STUPID, SKUXXOID!
VZAPP VZAPP
BOSCH BETTER HAVE MY MONEY!

VOOSHVOOSH
VZAPP
VZAPP
SHOOM
SKROOM
KRAKOOM
SKREEE

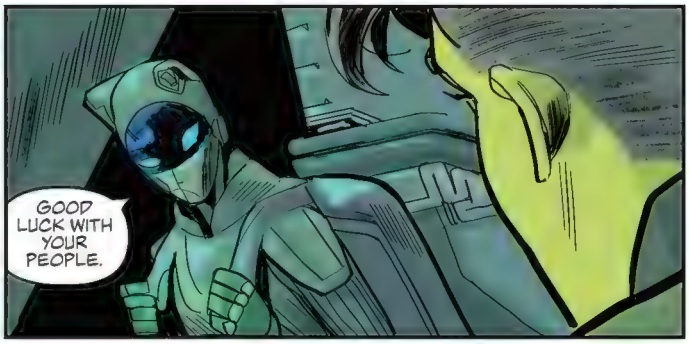
SKUXXOID!!
IF YOU STEP FOOT IN MONACUS EVER AGAIN--AS LONG AS I DRAW BREATH--IT WILL BE YOUR END!
SO SWEARS LORD GYCON!!
NO ONE IS TO HEAR OF THIS. UNDERSTAND?
NO ONE!

OKAY, WHATEVER YOU ARE, YOU BETTER BE WORTH IT.
YOU--
OH... WHO AM I KIDDING?
WHAT'S IT ALL *FOR?*





IF WE'RE GOING, WE SHOULD GO.
YOU CAN TELL ME ALL ABOUT YOUR INTERACTION WITH JETFIRE ON THE WAY.
OKAY, OKAY.
JUST... GIVE ME A MINUTE.


GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PEOPLE.

LUCK? I DON'T NEED LUCK!
I TRADED YOU IN FOR A GIANT KILLER ROBOT. HE'S GOT A SWORD AND EVERYTHING.
I'M GOOD.

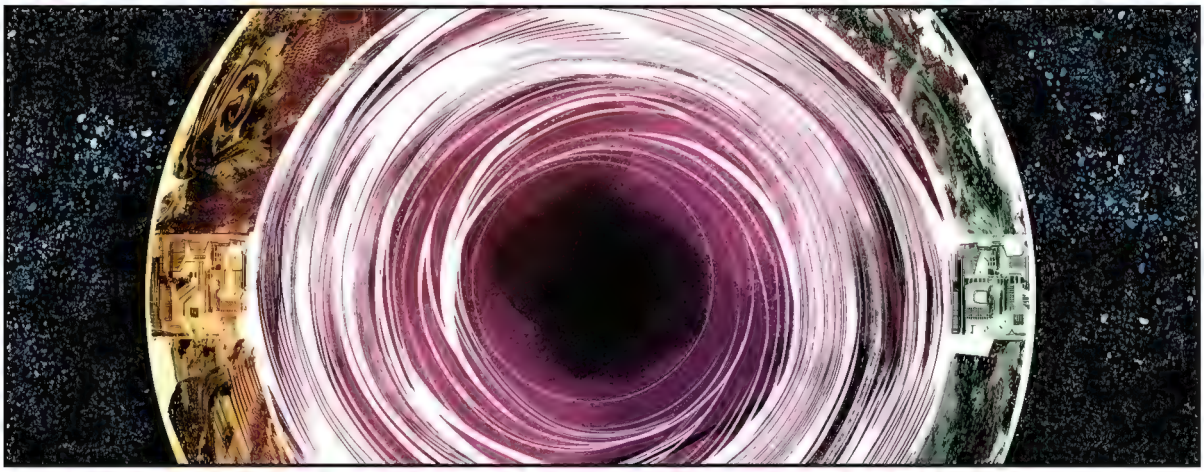
RIGHT.
AND YOU HAVE THE DATA PACKET FOR THE UNIFIERS? I DON'T WANT YOU LETTING THEM DOWN.
AS MUCH AS I DON'T CARE FOR KANELA...

I WON'T LET THEM DOWN. I'LL FIND WHOEVER THEIR AGORRIAN COUNTERPARTS ARE AND I'LL HELP THEM GET LINKED UP.
I PROMISE.
YOU'RE A GOOD MAN, DARAK.
AND YOU WERE SOMETIMES NICE TO ME, SOLILA.
SORRY, I'M NOT GOOD WITH SINCERITY.
SOLILA-- WAIT!

I WANT TO GIVE YOU--
--THIS.
HANDROID?
I HAVE A FEELING, WHERE YOU'RE GOING, YOU'LL NEED IT MORE THAN I WILL.
I DO NOT APPROVE OF THIS.
ALLOWING A ZERTONIAN TO WIELD A HANDROID IS ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN.
TREASONOUS EVEN!

OH, PUT IT ON MY TAB.
THANK YOU.
I PROMISE I WILL RETURN IT.
WELL, THAT'S SOME-THING AT LEAST.
DARAK...
"YOU REMIND ME OF MY BROTHER."
OH... THANKS.
NO, THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING. I DON'T WANT YOU TO END UP AS HE DID.

PLEASE.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
KLEK



I WILL.
AND YOU... DO THE SAME.

TALK TO THE HANDROID

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO VOIDRIVALS@SKYBOUND.COM

Ohhh maaaaan...now THAT is how you end an arc! Our heroes tragically part ways! Skuxxoid triumphant! Handroid betrayed! Who was that sleeping guy?!

Phew...another home run from the gang. Editor Ben Abernathy tuning in once again and joined by the one, the only, ROBERT KIRKMAN!

That's me! I can't believe we're already at issue 12. Already at a full two arcs worth of issues. I hope you're having as much fun as we are with this series. It's already kind of neat to look back at issue 1 and think about all the things that were yet to be revealed. So many cool characters and concepts that will become mainstays in the ever-growing and expanding ENERGON UNIVERSE! Who thought we'd be seeing Ultum again so soon? And now Solila has Handroid? and Darak is hanging out with Springer...long term? What?!

Stay tuned, dear readers...things just keep getting crazier from here!

Now let's dive into these letters.

. . . . . .

Greetings Handroid,

I am writing this message quick after reading VOID RIVALS #9 I already sent a similar letter of praise for the work done on Skybound's TRANSFORMERS run, and it didn't sit right with me giving that title praise and not giving it to the Void Rivals team. Every issue starting all the way back in Issue 1 you leave Easter Eggs and Cameos that make this Transformers fan giddy with delight, firstly with Jetfire. I thought my excitement was peaked when you introduced Shockwave but all that was blown away when I saw the cover of Issue 9 and saw my favorite G1 character of all time, Springer. At first I thought that the cover was a red herring but seeing Springer go toe-to-toe with Proximus, it got me excited for what the next issues hold. But don't get me wrong I have not come here to praise another Energon Universe title, the character depth and development, the growing story and intrigue in this new world. You made this die-hard Transformers fan a die-hard Void Rivals fan and I am forever happy for that.

But enough praise from me...this wouldn't be Talk to the Handroid without a question or questions in my case. With the melding of worlds happening with G.I. Joe and Transformers in the DUKE and COBRA COMMANDER series, will it be some time before we see Darak and Solila (not to mention Handroid) bless the pages of an issue of Transformers? Or will the crossing over of Void Rivals and Transformers be saved for special events?

You'll just have to keep reading to find out. I'll say they'll definitely interact more in some way as the stories progress, but our goal with the EU is to always keep people guessing and never do the obvious thing. So how they will interact will hopefully come as a huge surprise when it finally comes to pass.

And do you often compare notes with the Transformers team if you want to use a specific character and how to write that character and how it all fits in the grand scheme of things? And with how Proximus is managing to hold his own against an Autobot even putting them on the defensive, with Springer aiding the Void Rivals would we ever see a Decepticon team up with any Void Rival antagonists in later issues and who would you personally like to see Darak and Solila face in that gauntlet?

For me, the process is like a reservation. Transformers is Daniel Warren Johnson's book to oversee. So if he had plans for Springer, I wouldn't have had access. So we work with the editorial team to make sure a character is free and clear, and then ones that's established, I'm good to go. We are of course, always aware of what the other party is doing. So there's no chance we'll contradict each other or disrupt any far reaching plans. As for who else I'd like to see appear in Void Rivals...I'll never tell. You'll just have to wait and see!

Also, I do apologize, but will we ever find out what happened to Skuxxoid and his wife? I know I shouldn't humanize the bad guys it's a nagging question.

Of course!

From across the pond in the United Kingdom,
Many thanks,
Anthony Ioannou

P.S. If in one panel you manage to get Darak to say "I have better things to do tonight than die" as a nod to his new Autobot comrade I honestly will have no way to express my thanks

Regarding Skuxxoid, I would just say...I'm

dying to know what happened, too! Thank you for your really wonderful letter, Anthony, and your support!

. . . . . .

Hello Team Void Rivals,

I'm going to keep this letter short and sweet. Whenever a new issue of this book is released, I always make it the first thing I read. I love how Robert has been building out this unique and fascinating mythos with the Agorrians and Zertonians mixed in the iconography of the Transformers franchise. Not to mention that the art by Lorenzo De Felici and colors by Particio Delpeche are among some of the best I've ever seen in a book. But this does lead to my question. I noticed that after the release of issue 12 in August, the series was noticeably absent from the September 2024 solicitations. Is this because the book is taking another break like it did with the first arc or is 12 truly the end of the book as we know it?

Much love,
Owen Seyler

Thank you for reading Owen and keeping us at the top of the pile! Have no fear, we're just taking a skip month to deliver a blockbuster start to our epic third arc!

Yes, skip month. Unfortunately, I'm responsible for delays that catch up to us throughout production, so these breaks are necessary. It's frustrating for me, too! We took 3 months off between 6 and 7, we're taking one month off between 12 and 13 and I'm confident we will take no break between 18 and 19...so things ARE getting better.

. . . . . .

Dear Harbingers of Energon

A year ago I came for the robots, but after reading the first issue, it was clear that this series exists on its own greatness. Darak and Solila become instant favorites and I must confess, now I wait for them even more (if that is possible), than the other awesome EU titles.

I can only wish that VR Will reach the same success as Robert's other masterpiece, The Walking Dead.

Gabor Leszak
Hungary

PS.: The Handroids secret idea--Classified series EU edition Darak and Solila 2-pack ;)

Thank you for sticking with us for our first year--with many more to come! And no joke, I'll be first in line for that 2-pack haha!

Me too!

. . . . . .

Dear Handroid,

Here on Earth, Charles Addams had a handy fella looking after his family with a good natured spirit and so your adventure has been quite endearing right from day one. Some questions for you:

1) How deep are your bonds with Darak? Is it an ancestral bond? Cellular bond? Both?

You saw me being assigned to the guy in our second issue. That's why I was referring to him as "pilot" and not "Darak." So...next to no bond at all. I'm simply a tool Agorrians use.

2) Are there other Agorrians with their own handroids, or are you singularly unique?

I am one of many. I like to think I'm special but that's probably little more than a glitch in my programming.

3) Do you have the feeling you have met Springer, the triple changing warrior-scientist badass, before?

I do not. Although I do see similarities between him and that guy Jetfire we encountered briefly.

4) If you could change into anything what would it be?

Creativity is one thing that eludes me, sadly. The concept of being anything else is...confounding to me.

5) Is your favorite song, Willie and the Hand Jive by Johnny Otis, or are you more of a fan of Dark Was the Night, by Blind Willie Johnson?

I have no musical preferences. Darak sings to himself from time to time, and that, I do not care for.

Thanks for answering all my questions, Handroid!
Take good care of yourself, and Darak & Solila.
And don't forget, a manicure is good self care!

Aaron,
Earth

Some great questions, Aaron...I'm so thrilled Handroid, via Robert, gave you the full lowdown.

Dang letter writers making me work hard on a letters column, sheesh!

. . . . . .

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is a wrap for this month's letter column and our second arc of VOID RIVALS. Thank you ALL for your enthusiasm and support on this series, and all of the Energon Universe, as we probably wouldn't be here without it...be sure to drop us a letter to let us know how we're doing and be good to one another. See you in two months!

--Ben

Thanks for all the support and hopefully you're in this for the long haul like we are! There's so much more to come! See you all back here for issue 13 and beyond!!

--Robert

ROBERT KIRKMAN LORENZO DE FELICI PATRICIO DELPECHE
VOID RIVALS
#13
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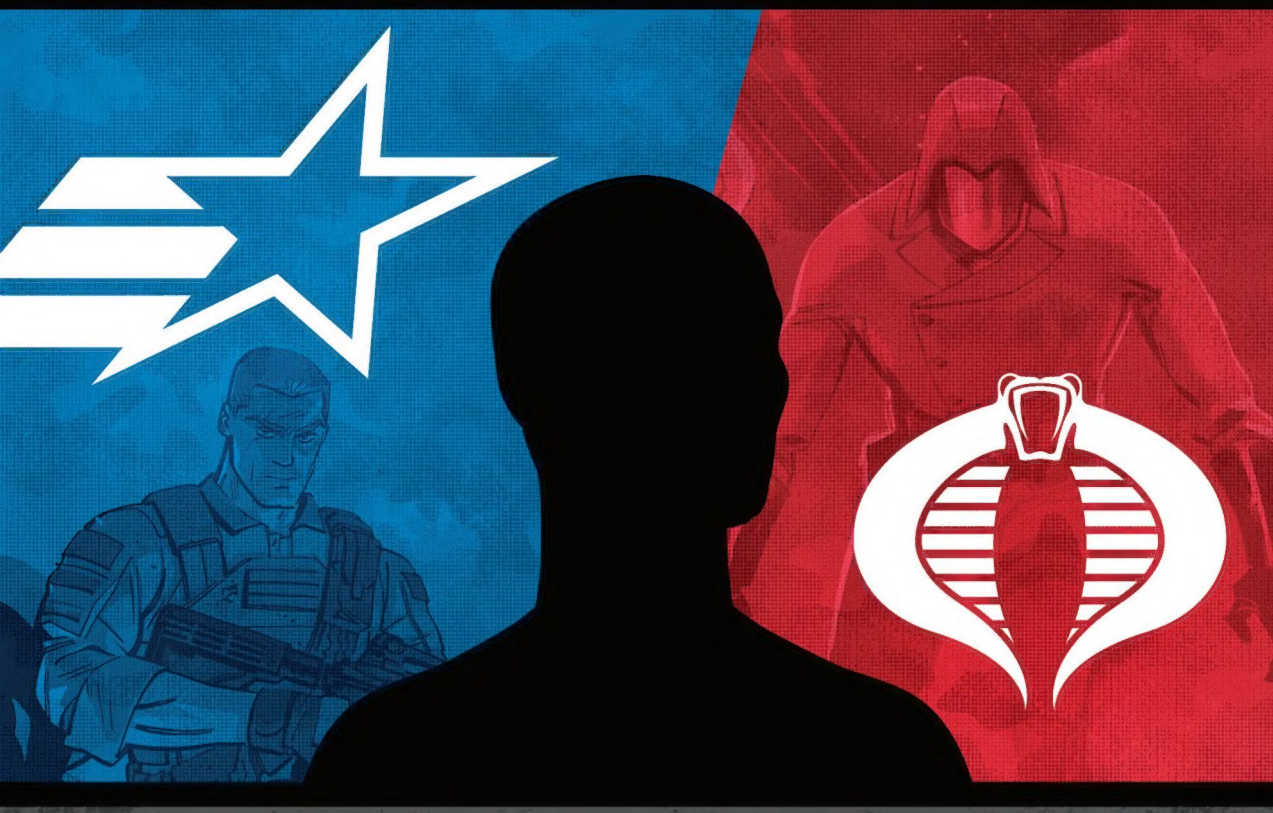

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